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C O N F I D E N T I A L UNVIE VIENNA 000159

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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [KCRM](#) [SNAR](#) [IT](#) [UN](#)  
SUBJECT: UN VIENNA CHIEF SEEKS EXTENSION OF TERM?

REF: UNVIE 0072

Classified By: AMBASSADOR GREGORY SCHULTE, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Antonio Costa, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Director General of UNOV, may seek to extend his current and second term, which expires in May 2010, to December 31, 2011, to coincide with the term of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Given USG advocacy and Geneva Group policy on limiting UN appointments to two terms, as stipulated in the 1997 UNGA resolution on management reform, Washington should quietly discourage Costa from extending, and seek alternative candidates for the position when Costa's current contract expires.

¶2. (C) When asked, Bo Mathiasen (protect), Costa's chief of staff, told Counselor on March 25 that he had heard such rumors. However, he professed neither knowledge of Costa's intentions nor the desire to be informed of such. According to Mathiasen, SYG Ban had said that no nation could expect ownership of a UN post. As a result, Mathiasen noted, the top job at UN's Department of Political Affairs (DPA), previously always occupied by a UK national, is now occupied by a U.S. citizen. Similar reshuffling of nationalities had occurred in other UN Departments: in conference management services (from China to Egypt), in DPKO (from France to jointly Canada and France), and in the Department of Management (from U.S. to Mexico to Germany). Mathiasen added that the Director General in Geneva, which has always been a Russian, would also see his term expire in 2010.

¶3. (SBU) Italians have encumbered the double-hatted Vienna post (UNOV and UNODC) since the late 1980s, a trend that probably originated with a \$30 million contribution to the then anti-crime entity in Vienna. (Note: Costa merged Vienna's drug and crime bodies to form the UNODC in 2002. End Note.) However, Italian contributions have declined since those days, and the current financial crisis at UNODC stemmed partly from the drop in Italian contributions to the General Purpose Fund (Reftel).

¶4. (SBU) According to the Italian DCM here, Costa harbors "personal ambition" to extend to 2011, when he will reach UN's mandatory retirement age. The Italian DCM told us that if Costa pursues an extension, the Italian government will support him.

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COMMENT  
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¶5. (C) In May 2010, Costa will have completed two terms, or eight years, in his current post. Costa and UNODC have been excellent partners of the USG. Costa's positions on fighting

drugs and crime align with ours to a large extent. UNODC monitors poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, work which no government nor other UN body has been able to perform. He has also proven himself visionary on the Afghan drug problem, by advocating greater ISAF involvement in drug interdiction and more agricultural assistance to farmers. However, his penchant for publicity and the grandiose have at times caused him to neglect the importance of close consultation with member states. Many UNODC staff have been severely frustrated with his leadership and management, due in part to his heavy travel. Member states have also been frustrated by his tendency to surprise them with announcements of new or questionable policy ideas at press conferences and other public fora. For example, he had to drop his surprise UN.ARMS initiative on firearms because of member state opposition. And, almost two months after we first heard of UNODC's financial crisis (Reftel), he has yet to make a decision on how to re-organize UNODC to meet the crisis.

¶6. (C) In any case, the USG promotes Geneva Group policy of term limits for UN posts, as provided in the 1997 UNGA resolution (A/RES/51/241). The resolution stipulates in its para 68 that the four-year term of executive heads of programs, funds and other United Nations bodies can be "renewable once." Costa, as head of a UN body, has already had his term renewed once. Furthermore, it may also be time for a non-Italian to assume that position, since Italians have encumbered it for more than 20 years. What is important now is for the USG to garner support within the Geneva Group to quietly discourage Costa from seeking a further extension, and to start looking for candidates to succeed him. Since the Secretary General makes the appointment to the double-hatted position (UNODC Executive Director and UNOV Director General), we expect all the lobbying to take place in New York and in the capital/s. The Italian DCM in Vienna has made it clear that the Italian government, which lobbied heavily in New York and Rome for Costa's extension last time, will repeat its efforts should Costa seek to extend a second time. END COMMENT.  
SCHULTE